

A Little About the History of Dominoes

Dominoes: Popular Games, Rules & Strategy, by Dominic C. Armanino

Domino games have been played by kings and presidents. The oldest known domino set was found in Tutankhamen's tomb, among the ruins of Thebes. Tutankhamen was king of ancient Egypt in the 18th dynasty, 1355 BC. The set is now in King Tutankhamen's Museum, Cairo, Egypt.

According to historians, a Chinese set, with 32 pieces, existed in the year 1120 AD. President Lyndon B. Johnson was a devotee of dominoes and played with friends in Texas.

Many different domino sets have been used for centuries in various parts of the world to play a variety of domino games. Dominoes are played by grown-ups and young people throughout the world.

Mathematical Games by Martin Gardner

Surprisingly little seems to be known about the early history of dominoes. There are no references to them in Western Literature before the middle of the 18th century, when domino games were first played in Italy and France. Later they spread over Europe and to England and America. The standard Western set of dominoes had always consisted of 28 tiles that display all possible pairs of digits from 0 through 6. Each digit appears eight times in the set.

Larger sets that run from the "doublet" 0-0 (two blank squares to 9-9 (55 tiles in all) or to 12-12 (99 tiles) have occasionally been sold to accommodate larger numbers of players. The tiles are usually black with sunken white spots. They may have been called dominoes because of their resemblance to the black domino half-mask worn in masquerades. No one knows whether European dominoes were invented independently or copied from the Chinese. In any case, they were popular in China for centuries before they became known in Europe.

RULES OF THE GAME

Block and Draw

Block, the simplest form of the game, is usually played by two persons. The dominoes are laid face down and mixed. The person who is to lead, or set, is chosen by drawing to see who gets the domino with the most spots. The pieces used in the draw are returned to the pack. Each player then draws seven dominoes and sets them so that opponents cannot see the dots, or spots. Beginning with the set, each person plays one domino in turn. The player must match the open end of a domino already played. If one player is blocked, the opponent goes on until a domino is placed that the blocked player can match. The game ends when one player goes out (goes out) or when both players are blocked. The winner is the one who has the fewest spots on the player's remaining pieces. One player's score is the number of spots on the opponent's unplayed dominoes. A game may be 50 or 100 points.

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